

Domesticating Continental Music Practices: Emergence of the Conservatory and Song Festivals in Finland 1880–1930

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The music culture in Finland today is widely known for its high standards. It might seem that new Finnish conductors, composers, and musicians are reaching out into international renown almost yearly. The national network of music institutes in Finland offer tuition in all the standard musical instruments and is accessible to all, independent of the level of family income. This is why Finnish conservatories have become a European benchmark. Finnish schoolchildren have repeatedly fared very well the global PISA survey (see <https://minedu.fi/en/pisa-en>), and music education in public schools is part of this same success story.

This, however, has not always been the case. The institutions of the music life in Finland are fairly young and many of their models, ideals and agents were imported from abroad, particularly from Germany. In this article, we take a closer look at two such institutions of transnational origin that had an important impact on the formation and early development of the music culture in Finland: the conservatory and song festivals.

Utilizing new institutionalism and discursive institutionalism as a theoretical frame (Alasuutari 2015), we will explore how these two institutions were domesticated to local conditions in Finland. As far as the conservatory is concerned, we focus on how the Helsinki Music Institute was established in 1882, its first curriculum, and the musical ideals on which it was based. As far as the “domestication process” of continental models to Finland is concerned, we discuss the prominent influence that the Leipzig conservatory had on the design and pedagogical ideals of its Finnish equivalent upon its founding in 1882. This influence, in Finland and elsewhere, was considerable. As Mäkelä (2021, 348) puts it, before the end of the 19th century the Leipzig Conservatory seemed unrivalled as an external educational facility, an international and cosmopolitan institution to which practically all Finnish musicians, composers and music scholars before the 1880’s, and even later, went to study. This tendency remained in the early decades of the 20th century, even if Stockholm, Dresden, Vienna, Munich, Berlin, Paris, St. Petersburg and

Moscow also became more and more attractive options for advanced study of music. (Ibid, 349.) Also, some counter-voices to the Leipzig model of music education began to be heard, blaming the institution for over-crowding the classes and thus lowering the standard of learning.

The strong influence of Leipzig was not peculiar to Finland. Michael Fjeldsoe and Sanne Krogh Groth go as far as to write about a particular “Leipzig model”, pointing to the city’s status as a kind of European benchmark for organizing musical life in the 19th century. This model entailed a high-ranking symphony orchestra, a first-class conservatory, as well as a musical society to gather critical mass to organize the practice. The Leipzig model proved attractive. Yvonne Wasserloos (2010) has charted the influence that it has had on the music life in Copenhagen, together with many other European countries and the US. Wasserloos points out that the original idea in designing the curriculum for the conservatory was to establish possibility for intercultural encounters, and for this reason study exchange with foreign students was deliberately sought. Very soon the institution achieved an almost exemplary status as an international music school of high standard. (Wasserloos 2010, 6.) The 1359 foreign students in 1843–1880 alone had a huge impact in their home countries upon returning from their study abroad. From 1865 onwards at least 40 Leipzig alumnae became founders of conservatories in Europe and North America, and at least an equivalent impact can be seen in the founding of orchestras and music societies. (Fjeldsoe & Groth 2020.) Ultimately all this continuous flux of international students over several decades came to mean that musical life in a large part of Europe, Finland withstanding, was structured in similar ways.

From the perspective of amateur music making, song festivals in Finland were molded according to the German example as well. In Finland, these festivals had a very national character. However, it is clear that the influences for the phenomenon came from abroad and in constant interaction with continental musical life and new aesthetic ideas brought from abroad by travelling individuals. (Kurkela & Rantanen 2017, 186.) Early song festivals were the first extensive music events in Finland, and from the beginning, they gathered thousands of performers and listeners from all over the country. Along with the rise of popular education in Finland in the late 19th century, music became an effective ideological and aesthetic tool for permeating the minds of the common people with new ideas. Song festivals educated the lower classes in music and fuelled the national spirit in all ranks of the society. (Inkilä 1960; Smeds & Mäkinen 1984; Särkkä 1978.) We will explore how and by whom the European festival practises were adopted

in Finland. Further, we will also discuss the ways in which the musical repertoire of the festivals was structured and how it was exploited to meet the needs and aims of the organizers in Finland.

The orientation towards social class was very different between song festivals and the conservatory. As opposed to the song festivals, the conservatory was from the very start an institution targeted towards the upper-class needs and the tuition fees were out of reach for the working class. What was common between the song festivals and the conservatory, however, was the German musical repertoire and practices that formed the core of both institutions.

We focus on newspapers published in the aforementioned time period, together with earlier research literature on the topic. In our focus on newspapers, we subscribe to Hannu Nieminen's notion of the crucial importance of what he calls "bourgeois publicity" for the development of a civil society in Finland. Following Habermas's "theory of the public sphere", Nieminen (2006, 15, 36–38) points out that the public discourse, particularly that published in newspapers and magazines, played a seminal role in the formation of the art world, as well as the society at large, in turn-of-the-century Finland. The writings of the press did not only disseminate the news but also set the standards for culture and enlightened the public. For a scholar of history, the public discourse of music reflects the burgeoning of the concert life of the Finnish bourgeoisie. The conservatory and the song festival were, of course, fundamentally related to this process.

Martin Wegelius and the Conservatory

As far as Continental Europe and Scandinavia are compared with Finland, the Helsinki Music Institute was a latecomer among its peer institutions in Western Europe. Just to mention a few examples, Stuttgart, Paris and Stockholm all had conservatories as early as the 18th century (1770, 1795 and 1771, respectively), and Milano, Prague and London in the early decades of the 19th century (1808, 1811 and 1822). The prestigious conservatories in Berlin and Leipzig were established in 1833 and 1845. The conservatories of Denmark and Norway were established in Copenhagen in 1866 and Oslo in 1883.

Conservatories are not just buildings and monuments. Rather they are powerful organizations that are there to educate professional musicians and to pass on and preserve the heritage of classical music.

As Geoffrey Hodgson (2006, 2) has argued, “institutions are systems of established and prevalent social rules that structure social interactions”. Most institutions, Hodgson continues, have criteria concerning boundaries and qualifications for membership. Institutions are often relatively autonomous, have a hierarchical social structure and a prevalent chain of command. Viewed according to Hodgson’s definition, it is easy to see that the conservatory has many of the characteristics that he lists. In addition to passing on and preserving musical tradition, the conservatory provides a social framework within which young musicians are able to develop and mature into the profession.

Even if the cultural and ideological aspects of conservatories have been explored quite thoroughly in the past decades (see Kingsbury 1987; Nettl 1995), these aspects of conservatories have only recently come to the fore as a domain of potential research interest in music history. Jim Samson (2006, 58) has pointed out how the establishment of the Leipzig Conservatory in 1845 was a real *tour de force* of German nationalism, and the curriculum was designed to cherish German music as the aesthetic core of the musical material studied and performed. The conservatory, Samson argues, “effectively periodised the emergent German canon” of Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and Mendelssohn. Martin Wehnert (1975) has pointed out the crucial impact that the model of the Leipzig conservatory had on the subsequent musical institutions in Scandinavia that were established in the second half of the 19th century.

Wehnert, however, does not discuss the Helsinki Music Institute, and it is one of the aims here to thus contribute to our scholarly awareness regarding the European origin of higher music education in Finland. The establishment of the Music Institute had a huge national signification in Finland, which at that time was still a Grand Duchy of Russia. The institute was established almost single-handedly by Martin Wegelius (1846–1906), an eminent composer, music theorist and music critic. Wegelius was an alumnus of the Leipzig Conservatory and many musical aims, pedagogical structures, and learning material for tuition were incorporated according to the German models that Wegelius, because of his own cosmopolitan background, was familiar with. Wegelius was also active in organizing song festivals since 1891 onwards, which is when the first Swedish-language song festivals were organized in Tammisaari. (von Bonsdorff 2019, 415.)

Wegelius modeled the curriculum of the institute according to the example that he had received while a student in Leipzig. The emphasis was on musical sophistication, broad musical learnedness, and not virtuosity. Music theory, history, and solfège, together with tuition in the

student's own instrument, were obligatory subject at the Music Institute from its inception in 1882. Group learning was customary, particularly in the theoretical subjects. Even the prohibition of the student from performing outside the music institute without the teacher's permission was adapted from Leipzig. The rationale of this prohibition was to protect the student from potential disappointments and critique. (Kuha 2017, 208.)



Figure 1: Newspaper article “Conservatory in Leipzig” in *Wiborg* 30 August 1861. The prestigious conservatory was presented in Finnish newspapers regularly at the time.

The Leipzig Conservatory was already well known in Finland decades before the Helsinki Music Institute began to take shape. In the newspaper clip above (see figure 1), Richard Faltin (1835–1918), a German-born conductor, composer and music critic, presents the institution to Finnish readers. Faltin, another alumni of the Leipzig conservatory, was to become the organist of Nikolai Cathedral, the main church of Helsinki, for more than forty years (1869–1913), the conductor for the Finnish opera (1870–1879), and music teacher of the University (1871–1896). At the time this article was written, Faltin was just five years from his graduation from the conservatory and working as a music teacher in *Wiborg*. Faltin was full of praise for his *alma mater*, and wrote that any “young student of music was best off studying in Leipzig”. Faltin’s two-part article (the latter part was published 3.9.1861) made a detailed summary of the curriculum

in Leipzig. Counterpoint, harmony, music history, and form analysis were given emphasis and the course of the study was strictly regulated, which Faltin considered to be the *sine qua non* for maturing into a real professional in music. The curriculum of the Leipzig Conservatory was infiltrated by the Hellenistic ideals of education, characterized by a broad range of subjects studies, which was also one thing that was common between Leipzig and Helsinki. Both were cities in which Protestantism and Pietism were prominent. (Mäkelä 2021, 349.) In short, virtuosity and advancement of sheer musical skill was never on the agenda of early Finnish music education.

Musical life Leipzig was followed keenly in the Finnish press in later years also. While a student in Leipzig in 1889, composer Oskar Merikanto (1868–1924) wrote in the newspaper *Uusi Suometar*:

All the musics of the world are given room here. Leipzig is, in a word, the center of music in the world. [...] You, who enjoy and find pleasure in music, and want to find a profession in this wonderful art – go to Leipzig. For only there will you see and hear something you have never encountered before. In your home quarters you may be admired and lauded, and if you further believe in all this, you are in a miserable state, for only here [Leipzig] will you begin to realize how much you still have to learn and how little you actually are capable of in the art of music. (*Uusi Suometar* 21.4.1889. Translation MM.)



Figure 2: Newspaper article in *Uusi Suometar* 21 April 1889.

In addition to Wegelius, Faltin, and Merikanto, the Leipzig Conservatory was frequently the choice for Finnish musicians aspiring to a career in music. As Tomi Mäkelä (2021, 351–354) points out in his essay, during the time span 1858–1913, at least 57 Finnish musicians went to study to Leipzig. Out of this sample, 16 musicians were women, typically of upper-class background and aspiring a career as piano teacher. In many cases, this proved impossible because of marriage and children, but of course there were exceptions. Just to introduce one of them, Henriette Nyberg (1830–1911) established a music school in Helsinki in 1859. Here is the newspaper ad for her school, undersigned by “Henriette Nyberg, student of the Leipzig conservatory” (see also Mäkelä 2021, 380). It is obvious that Leipzig conservatory is mentioned as a particular credential of the teacher, as a reference to a high quality professional standard that Nyberg had allegedly acquired through her studies in Leipzig. An exceptional feature in Nyberg’s short-lived (1859–1862) music school was that not only piano, but also chamber music and harmony analysis was taught there. (Kuha 2017, 145–149.) As in Nyberg’s *Alma Mater*, teaching the piano was organized in group setting.

Diverse. Musikskola.

I ändamål att här börja en musikskola, der undervisning i pianofortespelning och harmonilära meddelas af en lärare och tvenne lärarinnor från den 45 September till den 45 Juni med en månads julferie, för undertecknad härom underrätta dem, som önska begagna sig af denna undervisning. Elever m ttagas för minst ett år. Afgiften är 40 rubel om året för hvarje elev och erlägges förskottsvis med 45 rubel för höst- och 25 rubel för vårterminen. Enär 24 elever utgöra minsta antalet för inrättningens bestånd, anhålles ödmjukast, att de, som häraf önska begagna sig, behagade inom slutet af nästkommande Juli månad derom anmäla hos undertecknad, skolans föreståndarinna, boende uti hofrådet Nybergs härvarande gård. Helsingfors den 24 Mars 1859.

Henriette Nyberg,
Elev af Leipziger konservatorium.

Figure 3: Newspaper ad in *Helsingfors Tidningar* 14 April 1859.

From the generation before Wegelius, almost all the prominent music figures in the Finnish music scene – if one can talk about such a thing in the 1850s – were Leipzig alumnae. These include Johan Lindberg (1837–1914), Filip von Schanz (1835–1865), Gabriel Linsén (1838–1914), Karl Moring (1832–1868) and Ernst Fabritius (1842–1899), who had all received state funding for their studies abroad. It is obvious that the very idea of establishing a conservatory in Helsinki was fuelled by their experiences in Germany. The primitive music culture

in Finland must have felt provincial and undeveloped in their eyes. Even if there was already frequent talk of the necessity of an Academy of the Arts in Helsinki in the 1850s, nothing came to pass before the late 1870s.

The chair of the Finnish society of the Arts (established in 1846), Bernd Otto Schauman (1821–1895) proposed to the Finnish parliament in 1877 that an Art Academy be established. Wegelius was invited to join the advisory board of the initiative. Consulted by Faltin and other senior colleagues, they managed to come up with a concrete plan which they then proposed to the Russian Senate. Nothing came of this until 1882, when the Senate finally subscribed to the proposition and decided to fund the new music institute – this time without the other arts – with 12 000 marks (equals ca. 53 000 euros in today's money). The rest of the funding came from private sources, as a musical society had been established a little earlier to support the initiative. (Dahlström 1982, 11.)

As in Leipzig, the curriculum was structured as a three-year course, and tuition was given in piano, organ, violin, cello, voice and music theory. The yearly cost for the student was 250 marks for a curricular student and 200 marks for extra-curricular student (ca. 1100 and 890 euros in 2018). It was not inexpensive and the tuition probably excluded working class youth, which itself is a factor that generated a need for a cheaper option for receiving an education in music.

The idea of Wegelius was to establish an institution that educated professional musicians, and for this reason, recruiting professors was not an easy task. Violin was taught by Anton Sitt (1847–1929), Hermann Csillag (1852–1922), Mitrofan Wasiljeff, Bohuslav Hrimaly (1848–1894), Johan Halvorsen (1864–1935), Andre Spoor, and Carl Kihlman (1868–1948). Professors of piano were, apart from Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924), students of Liszt: Karl Pohlig (1864–1928), Ludwig Dingeldey, Carl Schuler, and William Humphrey Dayas (1863–1903). Organ was taught by Richard Faltin and voice by Emilie Mechelin and Abraham Ojanperä (1856–1916).

Piano was by far the most prominent of the instruments taught at the institute. During the time of Wegelius as rector of the institute, more than half of the students played the piano. Among the beginners, the percentage was even higher: in the academic year 1902–1903 as many as 85,7 % of the elementary students were pianists. It is also noteworthy that apart from Busoni, all the piano professors of the Institute were former students of Franz Liszt (1811–1886). The pianistic tradition in Finland owes thus a large part of its history to the Lisztian tradition. In spite of the international significance of Liszt's influence (see *Studia*

Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae 2001), this Finnish heritage of his art is not charted in detail. (See Rahkonen 2000.)

The impact of the conservatory was not only its contribution in educating professionals for the Finnish concert life. Art music was seen as an important ingredient for the *Bildung* of the Finnish *Volk*, and the alumni of the Helsinki music institute, as well as conservatories abroad, became key actors of the song festival movement in Finland. Conservatory-educated professionals thus made a huge difference in how art music became an ideological tool for the project of folk enlightenment in Finland. Song festivals were the most important musical manifestation of this huge project, and it is this institution that we now turn to.

The Song Festivals as Musical and Ideological Mediators

Due of the development of the so called “national public sphere” in Finland at the end of the 19th century, the lower classes began to have access to public activities alongside the bourgeoisie (Nieminen 2006). These changes were connected to the rise of the national movement in Finland, which aimed at educating the working class and preparing them to participate in the construction of the Finnish nation-state. As the idea of nationality strengthened, a need for various national symbols emerged. Creating visual, verbal, and iconic representations of national values, goals and history was aimed at uniting people. One of the foremost symbols was music, which became a key tool in enhancing Finnish identity and national cohesion, regardless of social class (see e.g. Rantanen 2013). Along with the foundation of other musical institutions such as the Helsinki Conservatory and music education system in general – song festivals became an important tool for rising the nationalistic spirit in Finland. (See Smeds & Mäkinen 1984.)

Celia Applegate calls the 19th century “the choral century”, which mobilized “tremendous number of people in formal and informal musical activities, in public, semi-public, and private music-making, in single sex and same-sex singing, in sacred, communal, and national musical gatherings” all over Europe (Applegate 2013, 4). In Finland, the first song festivals were initiated in the 1880s (the very first one in Jyväskylä in 1884) by the Finnish Association for Popular Education (KVS Foundation). This foundation was led by the Fennomans, a political group, whose aim was to raise the status of Finnish language

and culture to a more prominent status. The group was formed mostly by members of the Finnish upper class and the bourgeoisie. The main goal of the Fennomans was to uplift the sense of nationality by building a Finnish nation state with its own history, culture and language. (See e.g. Liikanen 1995.)

Song festivals in Finland could not have been possible without the wide networks of the organizers. The most effective distributors for the festival movement in Europe were touring choirs, musicians, music students and other intellectuals visiting abroad, who introduced the festival idea in their home countries and abroad. It was typical for the European festival organizers to include professional musicians on the festival committees to take care of the planning of the musical program. In Finland, among the most influential musicians and authors behind the song festivals were the same, above-mentioned music authorities such as Richard Faltin, Martin Wegelius, Oskar Merikanto, and as well as Emil Sivori (1864–1929), all alumni of the Leipzig Conservatory. In addition to planning the musical program, they often acted as conductors for the choirs and brass bands performing at the occasions. (Kurkela & Rantanen 2017, 180, 186–187. See also Hopkins-Porter 2016, 216.) With the rise of the national song festivals, also amateur choirs started to travel more and more and spread the idea of song festivals locally. At the same time, they introduced new music culture to people in their home villages and above. According to the continental models, classical music, German musical repertory in particular, was at the core of the musical education of the lower classes. (Kurkela & Rantanen 2017, 186–187.)

National song festivals had a huge collective significance for the participants in Finland, not only musically, but also socially and ideologically. The popularity of these events led to a real music festival boom. Particular in the 1890's, national music festivals were organized almost yearly, the venues alternating between all larger Finnish towns. (Inkilä 1960, 216–220; Smeds & Mäkinen 1984, 29–36. See also Kurkela & Rantanen 2017, 185.) The organizers had three main objectives: 1) to fuel the national spirit, 2) to educate festival audiences musically and 3) to increase the musical activities of common people by encouraging them to form amateur music groups, such as choirs and brass bands (see Smeds & Mäkinen 1984).

Models for the ideology, structure and musical repertoire of the national song festivals in Finland were imported from Germany and Estonia, where the ruling German upper class had already organized the first song festival by the 1850s (Kurkela & Rantanen 2017; Smeds & Mäkinen 1984; Zetterberg 1974). Estonia was geographically close to Finland and the cultural ties between the countries were close. For

example, Aksel August Granfelt (1846–1919), the secretary of the KVS Foundation and the main figure behind the song festivals in Finland, visited Estonian song festivals in Tartu (1879) and Tallinn (1880) to seek influences in festival arrangements. (*Kansanvalistusseuran kalenteri 1880*, 94–95, 103.) Therefore, the Estonian example was often highlighted in the Finnish newspapers.¹ However, Granfelt was also familiar with the music festivals in Germany, where the concrete models came from (Kurkela & Rantanen 2017, 178).²

In Germany, music festivals formed an important part of the German national movement since the early 19th century. The first large-scale music festivals reflecting national goals were held in Frankenhausen as early as the 1810s. These festivals had a lasting impact on musical activities in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. The music program of the very first festival (1810) included *The Creation* of Joseph Haydn and *The Fifth Symphony* of Beethoven performed by hundreds of German amateur and professional musicians. (Applegate 2013, 8.) The festivities usually lasted three days. In addition to musical performances, the program included festive processions with fluttering flags and coats of arms, as well as celebratory speeches with a strong patriotic tone. (Smeds & Mäkinen 1984, 18.)

Musically, the most ambitious early music festivals in Germany were the Lower Rhine Music Festivals (*Niederrheinische Musikfest*) organized from 1818 to 1867. Music program of the festivals consisted of symphonies, oratorios, and smaller works, such as arias, lieder, and overtures by distinguished classical masters such as Bach, Beethoven, Händel, Haydn and Mozart. (Hopkins-Porter 2016, 216.) Celia Applegate argues that these internationally known compositions marked “a cultural declaration of national independence” in Germany and strengthened the existence of Germany among the nations. (Hopkins-Porter 2016, 216.)

The driving force of the European choral festival movement, however, was the establishment of the German Singing Confederation (*Deutsche Sängerbund*) in 1862. The idea of nationality retained its

1 E.g. *Helsingfors Dagbladet* 12 July 1896, 13 July 1896, 16 July 1869; *Ilmarinen* 9 July 1869, 30 July 1869; *Uusi Suometar* 12 July 1869; *Suomen Wirallinen Lehti* 20 May 1880.

2 Regarding to the first stages of the song festivals in Finland, there were also direct connections from Finland to Germany. Fredrik Pacius (1809–1891), a notable figure behind the early rise of the choir movement in Finland, visited the German Singing Confederations choral festival in Hamburg as an invited guest of honour in 1882 (Namen-Verzeichniss 1882).

strong position in the background of the choral singing and music festivals. The main goal of the organization was to reinforce the idea of united Germany and to increase cooperation among the local choirs. The soul of the movement was mixed amateur choirs operating like associations. This model spread quickly to other parts of Europe. Soon after its establishment, the confederation started to organize national music festivals (*Deutsche Sängerbunderfest*). As before, festivals usually lasted three days and their venue varied from city to city. The music program followed the pattern of previous festivals presented above. (Applegate 2013, 9–11.)

Formation of the festival program in Finland

According to Derek Scott, scientists, philosophers and educators in Europe and the United States shared the aesthetic ideas concerning classical music as a universal form of art with fundamental power in the education of the lower classes. It served as an important means of strengthening memory, reason, logic, imagination, mental comprehension, and cultivating aesthetic principles. They were also convinced that classical music and idealized folk music could teach democratic principles and encourage obedience towards an undivided nation. (Scott 2002, 558.) Some even believed that singing in quartets or playing chamber music exerted a soothing influence over family conflicts (Gienow-Hecht 2009, 48). This “educational and uplifting” repertoire, as the educators and intelligentsia saw it, featured mostly short pieces that could range from overtures to ballet music, arias, songs, and solos for flute, piano or violin, to waltzes, polkas, polonaises, and other dance music. Transcriptions and arrangements of folk songs and traditional dance tunes were part of a strategy to attract audiences from all walks of life. (Scott 2002, 558.)

The repertoire of the Finnish national song festivals was rooted in this same musical heritage, as was the music education of the elementary school system and organizational activities such as youth associations, labour unions and temperance associations. These were all developing in Finland at the same time. As part of popular education, it was important to educate common people in music. Classical music formed the base of the new musical ideal over the vernacular tradition and was followed by the popularity of brass bands and choirs, which got their models from upper-class student choirs and military bands.

According to the European models, the Finnish intelligentsia also saw art music and musical activities as a civilizing force against the use of alcohol and other profane activities. (Kurkela 1989; Rantanen 2013.)

When the elements of European festivals, including the musical repertoire, were domesticated to Finland, they were shaped to fit the national and local conditions, needs, and purposes. According to German examples, the national song festivals in Finland lasted for three days. The program consisted of patriotic speeches, poetry readings, various concerts, festival parades, amateur plays and less formal popular events. The highlight of the program was a singing and playing contest in which all Finnish amateur choirs and brass bands were invited to compete. (See e.g. Smeds & Mäkinen 1984.) Competing in singing and playing skills became popular in Europe in the late 19th century (Applegate 2013, 10).

Typically, the musical program of the song festivals in Finland was a mixture of popular, national and classical items. First, it included religious hymns, Finnish folk song arrangements as well as national songs and marches, highlighting the development of the Finnish nation-state. The core of the national music repertoire consisted of five compositions that were repeated in each festival: *Maamme* (Our Land), the national anthem of Finland written by Fredrik Pacius (1809–1891) and Johan Ludvig Runeberg (1804–1877), *Porilaisten marssi* (March of the Pori Regiment), *Suomen laulu* (Song of Finland), and popular regional hymns *Savolaisen laulu* (Song of the people of Savonia) and *Vaasan marssi* (Vaasa March). These songs shared a strong national ethos and praise of the brave people and beautiful nature of Finland. Of the religious hymns, the most famous was Martin Luther's battle hymn *Jumala ompe linnamme* (A Mighty Fortress Is Our God), which, for its rebellious lyrics, was also well suited to elevating national sentiments. (See Kurkela 2009, 86–90.)

In addition to the national repertoire, important elements of the music program were popular works of the well-known Finnish composers, such as Richard Faltin, Martin Wegelius, Oskar Merikanto, and Jean Sibelius (1865–1957), the same influential figures behind the development of the Finnish musical life in general, as well as great classical masters, like Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. German classics established their place in the music program alongside the domestic repertoire. An illustrative example is the program of the Vaasa Song Festival in 1894, which featured works by Finnish professional composers such as Martin Wegelius' *Den 6 maj*, Robert Kajanus' *Aino Symphony*, Jean Sibelius' *Improvisation for Orchestra*, Armas Järnefelt's *Korsholm* and Richard Wagner's *Promotion Cantata*. In addition, the

program included works classified as “foreign masterpieces,” such as Luigi Cherubini’s *Requiem*, G. F. Handel’s *Athalia*, *The Creation* of Joseph Haydn, and Robert Schumann’s *Paradise and Peri*. These compositions were performed by professional solo singers together with amateur choir and orchestra. (*Pohjalainen* 23 June 1894. See also *Pohjalainen* 18 June 1894 and 19 June 1894; Rantanen 2013.) For the music competition the selected compositions included pieces, for example, from Schuman, Mendelssohn, Mangold, Rheinmerger, Schubert, Händel, Pacius and Wegelius (*Pohjalainen* 21 June 1894).

However, for this music to be sung and played by amateurs, it had to be suitably arranged. For this purpose, before each festival, the KVS Foundation published a new score book for brass bands and new songbooks for each choir type (mixed, male and female). In the public debate the repertoire of the amateur groups was sometimes placed outside what was considered as “real” art music. Four-part choir singing, in particular, was criticized in the newspapers for its simplicity in relation to instrumental music. The latter was generally seen as better, or more artistic, than vocal music among the music-consuming upper class in Finland. The repertoire of amateur music groups was, however, deliberately positioned between “high-brow” symphonic music and “low-brow” dance music and folk music. It can be categorized as “mesomusic” (Vega 1966) or “middle music” (Edström 1992). In the case of the song festivals, this meant that the aesthetic values of the repertoire were the same as in “high-brow”, or “proper” classical music, but the music was arranged in a more comprehensible form, taking into account the target audience, namely common people (Heikkinen 2018, 16). According to A. A. Granfelt, song festivals were not intended as “artistic celebrations” but above all as “national celebrations”. Their ultimate purpose was not to remain in the shadows of high-quality musical works. (Granfelt 1913.)

Conclusions

The conservatory and the song festival are good examples of the domestication process in the cultural domain of classical music at the turn of the 20th century in Finland. Both of these institutions used classical music for educational, uplifting and civilizing purposes. Through song festivals and conservatories, classical music became the vessel of *Bildung* in the eyes of the Finnish upper class, who saw it as their task to enlighten not only their peers, but also the whole Finnish

nation. As far as the repertory taught in the institute and performed at the song festivals is concerned, it is interesting to see how basically the same music, the standard classical repertory (Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, etc.), served both as learning material for students at the conservatory and as an aesthetic tool for evoking national spirit among the participants of the song festivals. As the music culture in Finland was very small, it is also obvious that the same musicians and composers were active in both song festivals and the conservatory.

New institutionalism sets great emphasis on institutions, social interaction and ideologies as bedrocks of historical change. This theory also gives tools to avoid the pitfalls of teleological determinism and methodological nationalism, which have too often been hallmarks of national music histories. Following Pertti Alasuutari, by “domestication” we refer to a cultural and social process in which the original (global) model is transformed in several ways. Local actors do not just enact a ready-made model but adapt or translate it to fit the local conditions and their own interests. Local actors have an active role in circulating and shaping ideas. Alasuutari argues, that “what is at stake in the process is not how much original models are modified to fit the local context, rather the point is that the local process through which policies or ideas are instituted, makes them experientially domestic, and such a process of domestication entwines a cosmopolitan consciousness with localism”. (Alasuutari 2015, 171–172.)

We argue that new institutionalism offers a good theoretical framework in which the emergence and development of the music culture in Finland can be further understood as a fundamentally transnational process, in which continental models were transferred and molded into the new context. According to Pertti Alasuutari (2015), the main contributions of the theory lie in the perspective of how global ideas are incorporated in local contexts. As Alasuutari points out, institutions – such as the conservatory and song festival – should be seen as something that constitutes actors rather than constraining their agency. An important aspect in the work of institutions is what Alasuutari calls the “epistemic work”. This is work that unfolds in the discursive domain – repertoires, textbooks, concert programs – through which more material actions are justified within the institution. In a nutshell, through epistemic work institutions work towards their future and at the same time situate their work in a historical context. A more detailed scrutiny of the discursive domain of conservatories and song festivals would have taken the present discussion beyond its limits, but this is a topic that we hope we can return to in the near future.

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